

In Italy, U.S. Style Is “In”

By Dana Biasetti

In Italy, food preparation is an art. But, while Italian style cooking may be found in all corners of the world, Italians themselves are becoming more aware of foreign cuisines. At the same time, Italy's booming tourism industry has stimulated demand for food products to supply the hotel, restaurant and catering industries. There is also strong interest in new and innovative products, especially in the health, specialty and ethnic food categories.

Italians have access to a broad range of fresh foods due to their own wealth of horticultural production. Italy is a fish- and vegetable-hungry Mediterranean nation. Italians are health-conscious, modern consumers willing to pay a premium for quality food. In fact, Italy is second only to Portugal in per capita spending on food within the EU (European Union).

American Style

American-style fast-food chains, buffets and salad bars are gaining popularity in Italy. The move towards more convenient dining has led Italian importers to search out U.S. food products adapted to self-service eateries.

For example, many bars, restaurants and food service companies are seeking foods that microwave easily. While home use of microwave ovens is still low, sales are increasing. Families with two working parents rely more and more on microwaves to reheat food and prepare frozen foods. Microwave ovens are present



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in most small shops to reheat goods such as pizza and roast chicken.

Italians are consuming increasing quantities of breakfast cereals, organic foods and snacks. In Italy, young adults are especially interested in foods associated with a typically American lifestyle, such as beer and salted snacks. American-type

packaging is perceived as trendy and consumer-friendly.

Overall, U.S. food exporters do well in the Italian market, including in the increasingly popular sushi bars. U.S. exports of bulk and packaged dried fruits and nuts have consistently sold well in Italy.



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What Exporters Need To Know

As a member of the EU, Italy has the same duties, levies and standards as other EU countries. EU law covers most matters relating to labeling, packaging, food additives, pesticides and other contaminants, as well as plant and animal health restrictions. A comprehensive guide to EU food laws and regulations is available at: www.useu.be/AGRI/expguide.html

When agricultural products enter Italy, they are inspected at the port of entry, and all papers are examined. Health authorities may test and analyze samples. Goods are released only after payment of import duties and other taxes. A product may enter commercial channels within 48 hours from the time of arrival at port, if no specific problems arise in document inspection or sample testing.

Import duties are determined by the tariff classification of goods and by customs value. With the implementation of a common customs code, the member states



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of the EU apply the same tariff on goods from outside the EU. Once an imported good is approved in one member state, it may move freely throughout the EU.

It is important to employ an experienced, reputable importer to work with Italian regulatory authorities to ensure the acceptability of specific products. It is also advisable for the agent to contact health

Big Public Italian Holidays

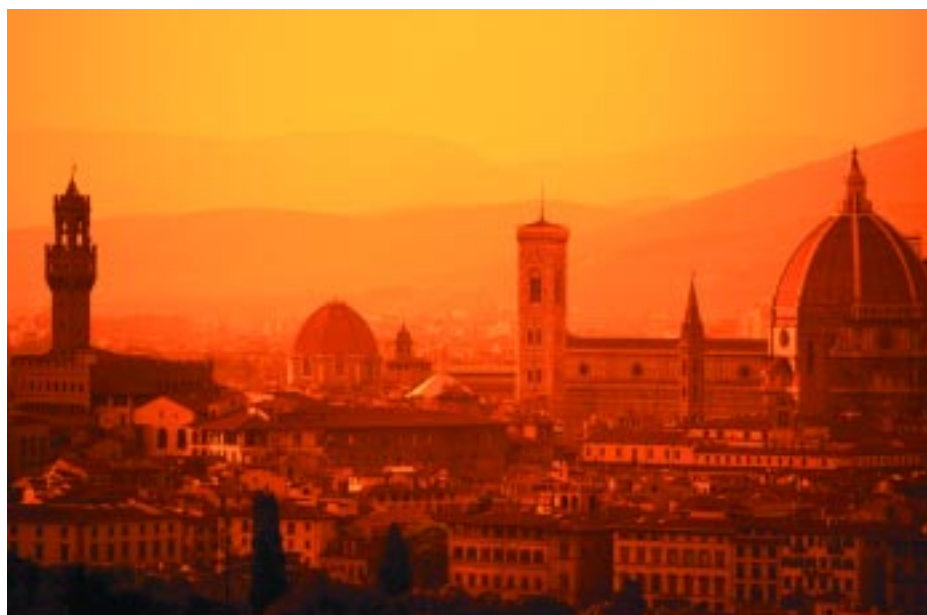
Holidays must be taken into account when planning a business itinerary. July and August are poor months for conducting business in Italy, since many businesses close for summer vacation. The same is true during the Christmas and New Year's period. When an Italian holiday falls on a Saturday, offices and stores are closed.

New Year's Day	January 1
Epiphany	January 6
Easter Monday	Usually in April
Anniversary of Liberation—World War II	April 25
Labor Day	May 1
Assumption Day	August 15
All Saints' Day	November 1
Feast of the Immaculate Conception	December 8
Christmas	December 25
St. Stephen's Day	December 26

authorities at the port of entry, as interpretations of health directives may vary from port to port. ■

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For details, see FAS Report IT2022. To find it on the Web, start at www.fas.usda.gov, select **Attaché Reports** and follow the prompts.



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